

## Iconographic Art in religious worship in Ghana: The Catholic culture in focus

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### Abstract

The paper presents findings from a study that explored iconographic artforms and artworks in religious worship in Ghana with a focus on the Catholic culture. It involved a qualitative approach based on case studies of four major parishes purposively selected within the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast. In all, twenty-eight participants were interviewed and iconographic artworks and practices were observed over a period of one year. The participants were 4 priests, 4 catechists, 16 youth as well as 4 non-Catholics. From the findings, it was observed that, the church is intertwined with diverse artforms and artworks with specific meanings. The images constitute significant liturgical accoutrements such as monstrance, chalice, thurible, signs and symbols that are used in the daily liturgical celebrations and seasonal ones such as Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil. Also, the youth indicated that the various imageries were not well disseminated to them by the leaders of the church. It is recommended that issues of the iconographic arts in Archdiocese of Cape Coast should be disseminated to youth to ease or do away with its uncertainties through strategic plans/activities in the Catholic Church. It is also recommended that, periodic activities should be organized for the public to expunge misconceptions of artworks used in the Catholic liturgy. This paper focuses on one of the parishes visited for the study, St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Assin Asempanaye in the Assin Bereku.

**Keywords:** artforms, iconographic, liturgy, worship

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### 1. Introduction

In diverse cultural milieus, religion is associated with a sacred manner of rendering supplication to a *Supreme* deity. Such prayer request and worship are rendered in the form of words recitation and songs. Some worshippers also prefer to kneel or bow before certain icons as commonly found in the Hinduism, Buddhism as well as Catholicism.

People communicate with others through diverse means: religion, entertainment, and other social activities. In the spiritual realm of worship, people venerate the *Supreme Being* who is considered the creator of the universe. Indeed, religion is a special way of communicating to one's creator. In the Christian religion, blessings and protection are integral results of prayers that form part of religious practices. Worship and reverence are usually difficult to comprehend by new members and those who are planning to be introduced into various religious groups, especially if clear steps are not used to introduce the new entrant into the faith. As such, children and

In Catholicism, art forms, precisely iconographic artworks are very necessary. According to Nketiah, Catholic Archbishop of Cape Coast, sections of the Ghanaian populace perceive rites, rituals and ceremonies in the Catholic Church as too "outmoded and fetish" (Nketsiah M. K., personal communication, April 13, 2013). He adds that, God is the same in the ancient time, now and in the world to come. Even people within the middle class crave to see some kind of worship related images at the worship premises. Perhaps, this is the reason why an ancient biblical belief reveals that man expected God's blessings and understanding through certain art works such as the *serpent pole* in the wilderness as ascribes in Numbers 21:8. Thus, art forms could be viewed as necessary for spiritual and physical growth of *the church*.

Throughout the world, the Catholic Church has common religious beliefs and practices that define the church as *universal*. In Ghana, the significance of iconographic artworks cannot be downplayed in the Catholic Church.

However, the significance of artforms and artworks, that are designed to contribute to the development of the church, seem to have fallen short of the very good reasons for which they were set up.

In the Cape Coast Catholic Archdiocese of Ghana for instance, most of the artworks are not well explained to the youth in the church and non-Catholics. The researcher, in a series of observations found out that, in recent times most catechists in the Cape Coast Catholic Archdiocese do not interpret the artworks in the church to the members, especially the catechumens. Also, a few art forms are found in most of the new church buildings within the Cape Coast Catholic Archdiocese.

In many religious-oriented societies in Ghana, the youth are expected to play pivotal role in the development of the church. As potential and significant members of the community, they are expected to undergo rudimentary training in the performance of church activities so that they can take up defined responsibilities from the ageing adults. However, the youth in the Cape Coast Catholic Archdiocese seem not to take the rituals, rites, ceremonies and other activities seriously. This apparent apathy may trickle on to other people who are new to the church's activities. This argument is based on the premise that the new entrant will not take the worship activities in the church as essential if the youth are apathetic to the church's activities. One may wonder the extent of the youth and other members of the Catholic Church about their understanding and value of the iconographic art in religious practices.

The ideas behind the significance of iconographic art forms in the Catholic Church are worth examining in addition to the perceptions of people with regard to these iconographic artworks. Again, the *Compendium* and *I Believe* which are considered to be the church's universal documentation to educate the faithful on the various doctrines of the Catholic Church, only touch on the spiritual meanings of the symbolic terminologies but less emphasised on the real visual arts and their benefits to the religious worship. In addition to the issues of apathy and difficulty in comprehending the need for the visual imagery in the Catholic Church, the researcher also observed that there is inadequate scholarship in terms of research on the essence and knowledge of the visual imageries in the Catholic Church in Ghana. In view of these observations, there exist geographic and contextual gaps on examining the iconographic artworks in the Catholic Church in Ghana in relation to the perceptions and interpretations of these icons.

### *1.1 Objectives of the study*

The objectives of the study were:

1. To find out the perceptions of the youth with regard to the use of the iconographic artworks in the Catholic Church.
2. To find out how best various iconographic artworks in the Catholic Church can be explained to ensure that they contribute to better understanding of the Catholic liturgy.

### *1.2 Research Questions*

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the youth with regard to the use of the iconographic artworks in the Catholic Church?
2. How best can the various iconographic artworks be explained to ensure that they contribute to better understanding of the Catholic liturgy?

## **2. Deconstructing Iconography in relation to Paintings**

Linking the term *iconography* to the context of religious worship, precisely, the Catholic culture needs to be handled with extra care. Iconography is also in synergy of *iconology*. However, the review of iconography does not deal much into iconology but, it is the manner of interpreting the rationale behind a group of art works in a setting, which is technically, referred to as a *programme* (Schneider, 1999). In a clearer perspective, Panofsky (1939) agrees that iconography is the manner in which visual imageries are described and classified, while iconology reveals the laydown canons that form the primary attitude of a group of people in a particular time frame.

Prior to his publication in 1939, Panofsky assesses a work of art in three major categories in his seminal article in 1932. The proponent opines that the three groups of visual interpretation centred on primary or natural subject matter; secondary or convictional subject matter, which he perceives as iconography; and thirdly, the tertiary or intrinsic meaning or content which is known as iconology. In a similar perspective, Roelof (1994), adds that

iconography explains the reason why an artist or connoisseurs select a specific subject at exact location, time as well as the manner in which the work is represented.

The entirety of Sistine Cathedral fresco rendition in Vatican is an example of iconology. Scholars and art historians may apply iconography simplifying the relevance of various artforms and artworks. Moreover, the term iconography also deals with the study of the *subject matter*, *theme* and *symbols* that have been incorporated in an art work. Such symbolic patterns are known as *icons* (Katz, Lankford, & Plank, 1995). The authors add that in about (527 A.D), due to persecutions of the early Christians by the Roman pagans for their religious beliefs, the Christians created many secret abodes like dungeons called *catcombs*. These catcombs were used as worship centres and burial grounds as well. Such places were adorned with images and symbols.

The ceilings, walls and floors were designed with deep philosophical representations. The images and symbolic forms were used as forms of interactions to put across sensitive and pertinent information. Circular shapes represent infinity or heaven while peacocks suggest immortality of God (Schneider, 1994). Comparatively, Schneider (1999) opines that iconographic technique overlaps the content of form in the various artforms. The term itself is derived from two separate Greek words (*eikon* which denotes the inscription of an image and *graphe*, which implies text illustration).

Taking Hans Memling's *Madonna and Child with Angels* into critical account, the artist incorporated some vital components of Roman and Flemish tradition, appeared to be conscious of high excellence in Italian Renaissance. The small angels *putti* inserted at the top ends of the columns glorify the entire work. Just beneath the *putti* is an arch which contains series of carved wine grapes signifies the symbol of Holy Communion (Figure 1).

At the central arena of the painting, is the beautiful Madonna who is fully clothed like the ancient women from a patrician home. On her laps, is partially seated the nude innocent child, gladly stretched diagonally to the west to touch the vibrant apple held by the angel (Matthews & Platt, 2001). Unlike the peripheral figures of the analogous Madonna iconographies of Giotto and his master, Cimabue, (Schneider, 1994), Matthews and Platt (2001) add that Memling reduced the strain surrounded figures and concentrated on a couple of heavenly angels with string musical instruments. The two transparent windows reflect foreshortening of tantalizing fascinating landscapes with architectural settings.

Though, most of the hues have been muted by the artist but the central figure's red garment re-echoing the *baldacchino* (canopy) above the floral pattern of the throne. Depicting the morals and spiritual culture of the people at the time, Hans Memling rendered a voluminous book believed to be the Holy Scripture and gowns fully covered the lower limbs absolutely.



Figure 1. Title: *Madonna & Child with Angels*  
Source: [www.Memling+after+1479.com](http://www.Memling+after+1479.com)

### 3. Some Iconographic Paintings in the Church

Since human being began to settle in several abodes, paintings have been one of the major sources of amusement and releasing of tension in one's immediate environment. Paintings are executed on various surfaces including the interior parameters of various settlements right from antiquity of human civilization. Artists of the ancient period across the globe registered communicative fascinating images for both religious and cultural purposes of a group of people. The palaces of Mesopotamia and Egypt were highly ornamented with different signs and symbols.

In Christendom, precisely in the Catholic culture, the *aleph* icon to capture in this context is Jesus Christ who is the founder of Christianity and Catholic Church as well. The second image to consider in Catholicism is the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. Apart from these two holy personalities, other vital righteous people were also taken into critical account. Different stylistic renditions of the apostles such as Peter, John and James are used in the church. Others who later joined the trend of propagating the gospel like Saint Paul are given reverence in the church's iconographic representation. In the later years, the church also recognizes some of the righteous personalities who have left good legacies while living on earth as *saints* (Guiley, 2001).

#### *The Saints*

Technically, saints are persons who lived a righteous life on earth, especially Christians. Such persons usually receive official recognition by the church, precisely Roman Catholics, for having lived a good life and holy manner (McKenzie, 1965). In some cases, the names of the saints are used to name various church possessions such as chapels, schools and hospitals.

Also, certain faithful Catholic religious are highly regarded as saints. Some of such religious personalities are usually from the priests, sister and few exceptional also come from the members. A typical example is the *Martyrs of Uganda* in the Eastern part of Africa (Guiley, 2001). The church has also apportioned the saints to take charge as patrons of the church buildings (chapels), schools and societies in the church congregation. Painted images are used to remained the faithful of the exemplary life the saints led their lives. These icons are adorned with different signs and symbols which coincide with the philosophy of the icons.

#### *Specific Art Forms*

In this section of the review, both visual and performance arts can be intertwined to address critical concerns. Although, there are numerous art forms in Catholic worship in general, this particular research work focuses on three major visual art forms. These consist of painting, sculpture as well as textiles. Indeed, various iconographic works of art are rendered in different styles and major disciplines (artforms).

Objects under painting comprise two dimensional images that are executed directly on walls, ceilings and or sometimes on removable surfaces such as canvases, panels and sheets of papers (Schneider, 1999). Paintings are also done on bare grounds and floors as well. In some cases, images on paper are framed with glass while the canvas and the panels are either decorated with suitable frames or left without borders

Paintings usually reflect the iconology of agony of Christ Jesus, which is preferably called *Stations of the Cross* (Malaty, 1992). Likewise, the Byzantine approach of registering images in stain glass, some Catholic chapels has also adopted the stain glass decorations in Ghana. At the city centre of Kumasi is situated the St. Peter's Cathedral Basilica of the Catholic Church. The main chapel is highly adorned with vivid flat colour application in the stain glass on the individual glass windows. Each panel has been rendered in typical traditional *adinkra* patterns of the Asantes and Akans in general. Also, various liturgical fabrics are adorned with these intrinsic *adinkra* designs. Indeed, the symbols have direct connotation with religious activities of the setting. Similarly, the glass windows of Moree Catholic Church in the Central Region of Ghana are also covered with church symbols. Instead of using the method of direct colour application, the designs were printed electronically on transparent vinyl (sticker) and transferred unto the plain glass windows.

Another art form to consider, so far as this context is concerned is sculpture. It is well noted as one of the major three (3) dimensional forms of art that can also withstand several weathering conditions depending upon the type of material use for the execution of a particular art work. In the era of thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Renaissance artists like Michelangelo de Buonarroti Simoni and Donatello created excellent images in marbles, bronze and wood, for the propagation of the gospel in Vatican and the immediate surroundings (Matthews & Platt, 2001).

### *Crucifixes and grottoes*

Years ago, the principal mode of oriental punishment was crucifixion. This cruel kind of punishment was introduced to the West from the Persians (Iranians). During the era of Roman Empire, crucifixion was used on slave and non-Romans (McKenzie, 1965). This cruel practice lasted for quite some time to meet Jesus' era, where he was condemned to death on the same mode. Religiously, crucifix is the agonistic symbol of the crucified Christ on the perpendicular cross. Other Christian communities have adopted the bare cross (without the image of Christ). But Catholics all over the world including those in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast usually decorate their sacred abodes with assorted crucifixes from the *altars* to the *grottoes*. This brutal nature of Jesus' death serves as an icon of reminding the faithful that they were not just saved on silver platter. Amoah (2012) contributes that; crucifix is the visual image which reminds the faithful of the agape love of Almighty God to save sinners.

Almost every Catholic community uses either bigger crucifix which is mounted on the *sanctuary* wall or the smaller one on the altar. At first, marbles and bronze were the popular materials for such sculptural images. But in recent times, they are made of several materials such as wood, brass, silver, copper, glass, and plaster of Paris (POP).

Grottoes in Ghana, especially those in the Cape Coast Archdiocese also employ the crucifixes apart from the images of the virgin mother of the church, Mary. Without the statues of Mary, grottoes are less essential. Life-size, colossal or miniature statues are erected in the hemispheric rocky dwelling that enshrines these statues. The grottoes are set at tranquil environments. There are larger grottoes that can contain large number pilgrims like the one at Saltpond Parish. In the similar way, smaller grottoes (shrines) are put up in the various parish centres like the grotto at the Cape Coast Cathedral. Grottoes are highly dedicated for devotions of the holy Rosary.

The rosary is a series of beads specifically arranged with smaller crucifix with a tread. Its prayers are guided by four major mysteries of the sacred life of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Other iconographic images, like the patron saints of the various parishes as well as typographic symbols are carved in wood or modelled in clay to assist in special devotions. The rosary is a series of beads specifically arranged with smaller crucifix with a tread. Its prayers are guided by four major mysteries of the sacred life of Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Other iconographic images, like the patron saints of the various parishes as well as typographic symbols are carved in wood or modelled in clay to assist in special devotions.

Some vital images are projected on medals and are worn by the church members and other sympathizers. Also, there is a special type of cross that portrays the image of Jesus Christ which is usually held at the fore front of procession from the main entrance or *sacristy* to the sanctuary to mark the genesis of Eucharistic celebration. Processions to the pilgrimage or cemetery are also accompanied by the bigger cross. It is highly dedicated for devotion of most Holy Rosary. The rosary is series of beads specifically arranged on a tread with a small crucifix. Its prayers are guided by the four major mysteries of the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary (Luke 2:26-28).

Reminiscent to performing art, the Adoration and Eucharistic celebrations are solemnly graced by burning of incense. Powdered incense is fetched from the *boat* and spread on naked fire inside the thurible. The thurible is a cute metallic chamber designed like a bowl and its lid with long chain which serve as a handle (Michno, 1998). So during Adoration and Eucharistic celebration the thurible is swung so that the smoke force the scent of the incense to come out as a form of reverence and humble sacrifice to God, the Father.

### *Host and Monstrance*

The bigger communion which is technically called the *Host* is designed in the form of circle with the embossed ancient Greek symbol of Christ, *xp̄ĪŌ̄Tos* (xp̄). Due to its delicacy, the Host is enclosed in a special brass structure known as *monstrance*. The monstrance is beautifully designed like the brightening sun with small cross above and sometimes with putti (little angels) to represent *cherubim* and *seraphim*.

In his recordings, McKenzie, (1965) explains that cherubim and seraphim are special type of angels whom God himself ordered them to guard the Garden of Eden to keep human from returning there. A symbolic-initials of IHS inscribed in a circle represent Jesus. It is so in the sense that the IHS is the first three letters of the Greek word, "Ihsus". In the recent times, the 'H' at the centre of the IHS is superposed with a symbol of cross as IHS inside a circle or left to stand alone.

**INRI:** The initials, INRI are usually inserted in a floral banner at the topmost part of crucifix. They are the first alphabets of four Latin words, "Jesus Nazerenus Rex Judaeorum" as ordered by Emperor Pilate, and ascribed

above the crucified Christ on the cross (John 19:19). St John adds that the text was written in three interwoven languages; Hebrew, Greek as well as Latin.

**A/Ω:** In some cases, A/Ω are embossed on Pascal candles and some vital objects in the Catholic Church. These two Greek letters stand for Alpha and Omega. According to Apocalypse (Revelation 22: 12-13), Christ is the beginning and the ending or infinite.

**AM:** The combination of A and M in the Catholic culture represent Ave Maria, literally, Hail Mary as proclaimed by the archangel, Gabriel during the final annunciation of the expected Messiah (Luke 1: 26-38). Also, a symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary is represented in the form shown in *Figure 2*.



Figure 2. A symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Source: [www.140pxAve/Maria/and/Cross/001.com](http://www.140pxAve/Maria/and/Cross/001.com)

**The Lamb:** One of the vital symbols recorded in the Holy Bible is the Christ Jesus as the Lamb of God asserts in John (1: 35-36) as well as Revelation (5: 6-14). The sacrificial lamb is portrayed by the juxtaposed flag for his conquering over death. The Dove: The power of the Holy Spirit is usually represented by a dove in several postures (Amoah, 2012). The dove may be drawn with a stock of leaves; sometimes too with light rays or with fire flames. The various iconographic arts in the Catholic culture are painted or drawn; embossed, or woven on surfaces and structures in and around the church premises. Some are incorporated in door designs, altar, sanctuary seats, walls, altar cloth and the outfits of the clergy.

#### *Textiles (liturgical fabrics)*

Liturgically, the Catholic culture employs some specific clothing colours to mark series and celebrations within a certain time period. Selected colours for the clothes comprises; red, green, white, violet and blue. These colours and symbols provides a clear artistic illustration which represent people who have left positive hallmarks or items that are necessary for religious connotations (Kaitholil, 2006).

In Catholicism, Red is used for the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, because the red colour symbolizes the outpouring of the symbolic Holy Spirit who appeared during intercessory prayers of the apostles (Talley, 1991). Also, Osei Bonsu, (2005), adds that in the Catholic Church, red stands for atonement for sins of believers of Christ Jesus. It is used to celebrate *Passion Sunday* (Palm Sunday) as well as *Good Friday*. During the memorial feast of the martyrs, red is used to decorate the altar and worn by the priest with other designs apart from the dove

#### **4. Liturgical Colours in the church**

**White:** Atop the altar, where Eucharistic sacrifices are performed, is always covered with white fabric. Lace is not accepted or recommendable as altar cloth. The reason being that lace can actually course delays and accidentals during *consecration* (Fr. Abaka, 2005). Fr. Abaka continues that, a little thorn or strip of the lace can get in touch with a minute rough part of the *chalice* and can really course accident on the altar. Fr. Abaka adds

that, there is no specific type of fabric used on the altar. But on Good Friday, every altar in the Catholic Church is stripped naked; with no fabric which signifies the condemnation and death of Christ (John 19:2). Indeed, white is a symbol of spotless, holiness of God, purity, innocence, virginity, and virtue. White is also used for some major seasons in the church; such as Christmas and Easter. During baptism, a piece of white fabric is used to cover the newly baptized for the one to live in blameless life (Psalm 51:7 and Revelations 1:4).

**Violet:** Among the Catholics, violet is popularly known as *mauve*. It is used to mark the preparation of Easter season. This liturgical season is called Lent. It is a period between *Ash Wednesday* and the Wednesday prior to the *Easter Tridium* (Holy Thursday before Good Friday). The entablature of the altar and pulpit are covered with mauve. The Priest also put on *stoles* and *chasubles* designed in the hue of mauve over the white *cassock*. In the similar approach, violet is used for funeral mass and the preparation season of *Advent* (Ordo for the Liturgical Year 2015, 2016).

**Green:** In every Catholic liturgical year, there are 34 Sundays in the season of *Ordinary Time*, where the principal fabric in the church is Green colour. It suggests newness of the Christian life (New Saint Joseph, 1986 & II Corinthians 5:17). The book continues that though in the Ordinary Time, apart from certain number of dates that are set aside for the memorial service of martyrs, saints, as well special commemoration, green colour is used to decorate the altar and the pulpit. Also, the celebrants are adorned with green colour in the rest of the period.

**Blue:** One of the rare colours in the Catholic liturgical culture is blue. It is the natural hue for sky, truth and calmness. Philosophically, since the church perceives Virgin Mary as the mother of peace and her zeal to disclose the hidden truth, the blue colour is used to commemorate her blessed dignity. At this point, *figure 2.6* provides a clearer comprehension to the major liturgical seasons and time period in which these seasons are observed.

**Red:** It is one of the liturgical colours reserved for to mark Passion Sunday, Good Friday, and Outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the observation of the feast of the Martyrdom. On Good Friday, only the priests and the celebrants put on red garments. The altar is stripped naked which connotes the removal of Christ Jesus' garments prior to his brutality on the faithful cross at Calvary.

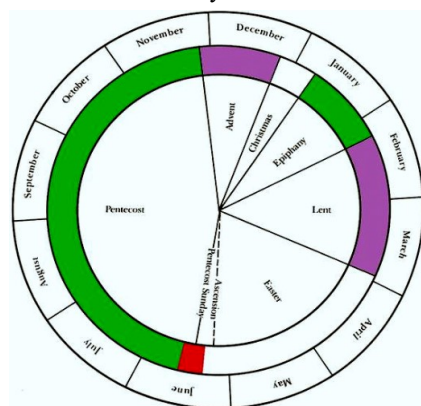


Figure 3. Size of Major seasons in the Catholic Culture  
Source: [www.pinterest.com/pin/258253359851626183/](http://www.pinterest.com/pin/258253359851626183/)

## 5. Methodology

In view of the nature of the topic, the study employed qualitative research approach to compile and analyse the data gathered. Case studies of four churches in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast were the main focus and the data obtained were discussed and analysed based on exploratory and descriptive methods. The researcher gathered data by means of interviews, and observation as well as the inquiry of vital printed texts.

The study area of this research work covered four major parishes of geographical zones in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast which is also in the same physical boundaries of Central Region of Ghana. Indeed, the study was carried out within four major parishes. These churches constitute three main parish centres and an outstation.

The search focused on churches where numerous iconographic arts have been incorporated in the worship abodes (Catholic Church Archive 2011). The specific zones within the vast geographical terrain of Central Region are shown in Figure 4.

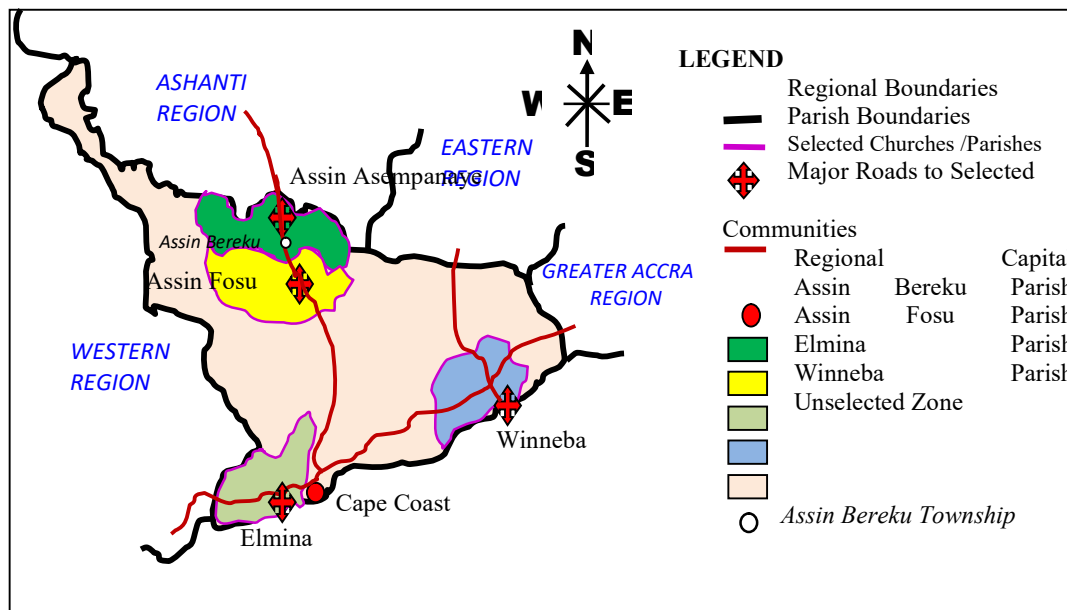


Figure 4. A map showing the selected parishes in the Central Region (Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast)  
 Source: Designed by the Researcher, June, 2017

### 5.1 Sampling and Sampling Techniques

In order to have an effective study, the researcher focused on groups of the four selected Catholic Churches: The priest (clergy), non-catholic believers including traditionalists), the Youth Council, (C.Y.O., Knights of the Altar, Youth Association and School of Jesus), and Catechists. They are: One (1) Priest each from the four (4) focal parishes; Youth Council, sixteen (16) people, four (4) from each parish and four non-Catholics were interviewed.

Purposive and random sampling techniques were used. Each interview lasted over a period of about forty-five minutes. The interview spanned over a period of four months. With regard to the picture-cued instrument, a camera was used to take shots of relevant information at the areas of research. The camera was handled by an assistant as the researcher made critical observations and interviewed the participants. All these facilitated the research process and kept the researcher on track to be time-bound and finish on schedule. Specific weeks within the execution of the actual work were conducted interspersed with various socio-cultural activities in most part of the Ghanaian society. In a more specific approach, the church also fixed its major activities during the early and last weeks of the various months within the year. The researcher took into consideration Sundays within the months, where majority of the interviewees were met. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

### 6. Iconographic Arts in Assin Bereku Parish, Assin Asempanaye

One of the earliest Catholic churches established in the hinterlands of the Archdiocese of Cape Coast is St. Anthony's Catholic Church, Assin Asempanaye in the Assin Bereku Parish as indicated on the (Map 1: A map showing the selected parishes in the Central Region Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast). Although it is



considered as remote and ancient community in Assin North Municipality, Asempanaye is easily located alongside the Cape Coast –Kumasi highway, near the River Pra basin. Geographically, it is approximately spotted at the middle of the said highway. Entering the church premises, one could easily record the interesting dilapidated ancient edifice, which was built in partially gothic style of architecture (Figure 5). The construction of new chapel is in progress, but the artforms are richly reserved in the old chapel.

At Assin Bereku Parish, greater numbers of the iconographic arts were observed at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church, Assin Asempanye. It is one of the outstations under the jurisdiction of Assin Bereku Parish. It is a last but one community to Ashanti Region when heading towards Kumasi, from Cape Coast. At the sanctuary is the resurrected Christ at left wall panel which re-echo the gloried Virgin-Mary in Heaven.

Also, at the central arena of the sanctuary wall is the gate way to the cross. This ridge of painting and central sculptural crucifix is in synergy of Benjamin Offei Nyarko’s (Bon) Triptych of Nativity in Akwaaba (2001). Taking the *Resurrected Christ* into account, the image is adorned with curled clouds below with the cloth shadowing both legs. The artist, J. Panford registered the drapery with high sense of realism (Figure 4.2).

Christ wears cloth over a *jumper* as ancient Israelites or Akans of Ghana. The arms are flexibly opened in a ‘V’ form which perhaps suggests victory over the power of Hades (death). The conqueror, Jesus is decorated with white garments which also signify victory over death. Around the head is the yellow halo as a universally accepted symbol for the righteous people in art.

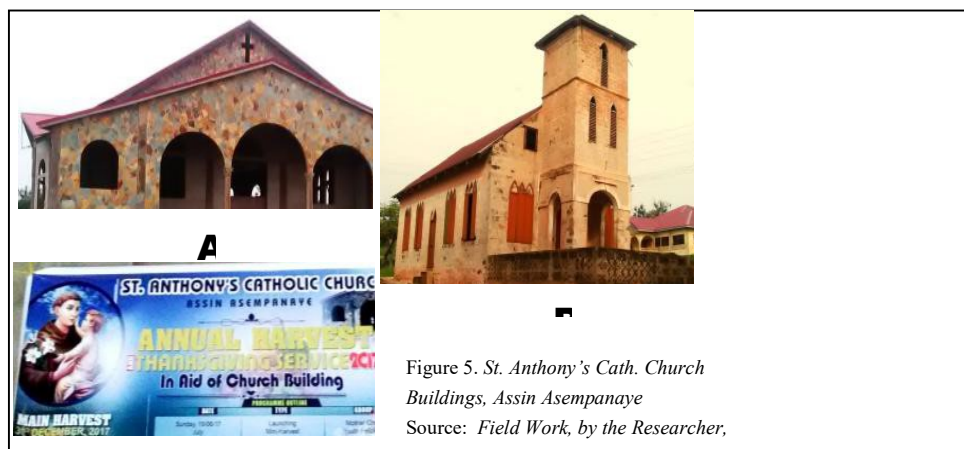


Figure 5. *St. Anthony’s Cath. Church Buildings, Assin Asempanye*  
Source: *Field Work, by the Researcher,*



Figure 6. *Resurrected Christ*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*

As indicated earlier, the second vital image to consider in the St. Anthony's Catholic Church is the *Virgin Mary-Coroneted*. Catholic Church perceives Mary as the Queen of Peace, so colour blue is usually used to depict her identity. This particular iconographic representation of Mary is also rendered in subdued blue garment. Though coroneted in the Heavenly Kingdom Revelation (12:1) instead of twelve brightly stars surrounded her head, five (5) stars have been registered by the artist.

Perhaps the artist was struggling for space to execute the rest of the stars or the five (5) stars may stand for the powerful name, Jesus as the spiritual crown over his mother, Mary. Beneath the figure is the crescent. Initially, this particular crescent supposes to be the globe on which Mary stands. But after the partial restoration in the Church paintings, the globe was covered and as of now it still remains crescent. Mary has opened the arms downwards in the form of 'V' turned upside down towards her feet, which signifies *let there be victory and peace on earth* (Figure 7).

At the central section of the sanctuary wall is the *way to the cross* (Figure 4.4). The researcher was told that at first, there was no crucifix over the painting. It was just recently that the crucifix was erected at this particular segment. Like the European patrician home disclosed in the Titian's Last Supper (Schneider, 1994), the work reveals two perpendicular columns with open curtains tie to each column at both sides. The viewer's eyes can easily link the gold-plated crucifix which is close to life size. Catholics who are not conversant with the universal accepted iconography of Virgin Mary's Coronation will perceive this as the authentic one. Glorifying the central mural at the sanctuary, two (2) **puttis** (little angles) on both sides are hovering over the celebrant at the main altar. The puttis are found in the mist of yellow curled banner which stretches from the east to west (Figure 8).



Figure 7. *Virgin Mary- Coroneted*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*

The two (2) puttis are dressed in skirts. Over hear, the researcher also recorded another fascinating drapery of garments. These puttis reflect the happy moment of *Cherubim* and *Seraphim*. The inscriptions on the banner are registered in Ghanaian local dialect, Fante. The text reads *Enyimnyam nka Nyankopɔn wɔ sorsor* literary, “Glory to God in the Highest”. Right below the sanctuary left angel is another Fante inscription that runs at the southern section of the yellow banner. The text, *Hotseweenyi Antɔni ye Asɔr ma hen*, which literary means, “Saint Anthony, Pray for us”. Re-echoing the opposite side in the similar corrugated banner is also at the bottom section of the entire ridge of banner. The section bears the inscriptions, *Maria Krɔnkɔn Hu Hen Mbɔbɔr*, which literary refers to as “Holy Mary, have compassion on us”. The repetition of red rose flowers with green leaves registered just below the triptych on horizontal axis which runs from left to right signify the congregation rendering praises to God Almighty at the sanctuary. In fact, these flowers and similar ones in other churches may have different interpretations depending on the exact philosophy of the work and how the flowers are incorporated.

Like the scenery walls of ancient mysteries of Dionsus of the excavated Pompeii (McKenzie, 1965), the other interior walls of St. Anthony Catholic Church are covered with segmented imagery. Recording other iconographic arts in the church, the researcher sported the *Guardian Angel with a girl child* (Figure 9). Since children are considered innocent, the Guardian angel found it necessary to be the friend and helper of the child (Ray, 2017). Both the angel and the child are barefooted. The usual identification of the angels is exempted in the work. Beautiful wings are flexibly attached to the adult angel with a draperied straight or long garment. The work directly links the ideology of the faithful who attend church service at the palace. The work is different from other Guardian angels in other parishes.

It is a fact that greater number of signs and symbols emerged to solve several problems in different human endeavour. Religion has also been one of the areas that have demanded a lot of stylistic iconographies. During the era of the early Christian Persecution at the time of Emperor Nero in about AD 60-67, people really developed on several modes of communication. The Catholic also saw the need of combining certain phrases for the liturgy to survive. Over here, there is also another iconographic art in the form of distorted texts that have been superimposed as a single design.

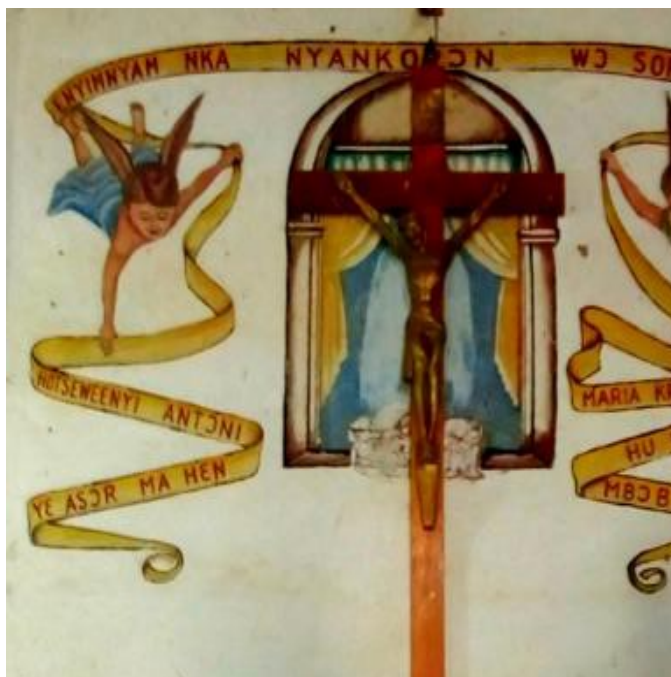


Figure 8. *Way to the Cross*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath.Ch., Assin Asemanaye*



Figure 9. *Guardian Angel with a girl child*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath Ch., Assin Asemanaye*

Beautiful flower also surrounded the work. The exact meaning the entire work is *Jesus Our Saviour*. Similarly, the front view of the altar also bears the monogram (Figure 10). Glorifying another segment in the St. Anthony's Catholic Church is a composition of duplication of internal human organ, plants and artificial objects. In this image, several elements have been put together for a particular meaning in Catholic worship. Concave and convex ridges of two different flowers are governing the two flamed hearts. The left heart is entangled with twisted rope of thorns which means *The Heart of Jesus Christ*, while the heart pierced with a warrior's sword represent *The Immaculate Heart of Mary*.

Right above the two (2) hearts is the beautiful crown which signifies the rewarding crown of the two worried hearts of Jesus Christ and his mother, Mary. The crown also means the final appreciation from God the Father to the two (2) great righteous people. This does not actually mean that the two righteous personalities share the same crown, rather same kind of such crown is likely to be given at the end of a righteous' tasks. The metallic anchor on the cross signifies believers who were under the satanic bondage have cast on the loving soul of Christ. Indeed, the researcher perceives this composition as wreath to be presented at a religious grave yard Figure 11.



Figure 10. *Jesus Our Saviour*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*



Figure 11. *The Heart of Jesus Christ and The Immaculate Heart of Mary*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*

One of the earliest musical instruments is *the harp with flower vase* at the west, lightened candle at the east as well as the book at the foreground which suggests a special musical note from the biblical Psalmist (Psalm 100). In fact, this particular musical symbol is unusual in the general iconographic forms of art in the Catholic culture. The work is rendered in mastery perspective approach. The flower vase and the candle stand (lamp stand) are designed to resemble balusters of the Baroque and Rococo era of art (Figure 12).

At the opposite of the *Guardian Angel* are two figure iconographic images. This fascinating imagery depicts the patron saint, *Anthony with the child Jesus*. Though, St. Anthony did not see Jesus' physical existence, but philosophically, this religious man always imagine cuddling the child Jesus whenever he is lonely. The patron saint had it in mind that he wanted to be more humble-like the child Jesus. The heads of these persons are governed with critically constructed *halos* which are artistic identification of religious and righteous personalities. As a priest, precisely, a monk, he is dressed like one. Probably, this pose impression was made after a story had been told to his contemporaries.

His monk haircut resembles a round helmet over his head. Infant Jesus' hand is diagonally reposing on the left chest over the drapery cape of the saint. The bigger hand of the saint covers more than one third of the little Jesus who sits at the edge of the bible. Right underneath the saint's hand is bible with fragrance flowers at the centre. Like the artistic typographical design, the holy bible and pulpit reflects the form of letter "T".

Viewing the overall picturesque of the work, the researcher realized that, that is the unique manner of representing St. Anthony, usually with a child which is perceived to be the tender age of the messiah, Christ Jesus. As holy as he is, the infant Christ covered with white satin as against the dark-brown garment of the patron saint, Anthony. Unlike the greater number of High Renaissance paintings which were executed in *buon fresco* (wet plastered paintings) works in this particular chapel were rendered in *secco frescos* (dry wall paintings). Also, taking advantage from the colour of the interior walls, the artist only picked the dark and light tones (Figure 13). In certain parts of the Cape Coast Archdiocese, some of the iconographic forms have their existing societies in the congregation. Just as St. Anthony's Catholic Church at Assin Asempanaye, the society of the patron saint St. Anthony's Guild was in existence till the last decade.



Figure 12. *The Harp with Flower*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*



Figure 13. *St. Anthony with the Child Jesus*  
Source: *Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye*

Decorating various segments in the chapel, another symbolic image, *the Face of Jesus Christ* was also captured (Figure 14). It is one of the most controversial images in the Catholic culture. In the “stations of the cross”, a woman called Veronica bravely meandered herself through the cruel arena and wiped the face of the agonized Jesus. Probably, as a way of showing respect to the messiah, Veronica used white cloth for that courageously approach. Coincidentally, the cloth then picks His facial image.

The face of the Jesus Christ is always represented hanging or nailed on the cross. Identifying Jesus' cross from the other crosses, Jesus' cross usually bears the diagonal banner with four abbreviated inscriptions executed by the Emperor Pilate in the book of John 19: 19-20. At the intersection of the cross is the thorny twisted rope which represents the Jesus' crown of thorns. The crown is painted green which signifies greatest hope in the agony of Christ Jesus as a faithful. Commenting about this iconographic art, the researcher contemplated about the racial authenticity of this image. History has it that Veronica showed great compassion to the suffering Christ.

But stories surrounding this mystery could not justify whether the original image of Christ is black or white descendant. Some scholars have also opined that the true image of Christ is typically from the black race. When some Catholic youth are confronted with issues like this particular image, things sometimes become very difficult for them to defend the authenticity of the symbol used in the church.

*Illuminated Candles:* One of the illuminated symbols in Catholicism is candles. As recorded in the book of Apocalypse (Revelation) 1: 12-13, the spirit of Lord God was standing in the mist of seven golden lampstands (candlesticks). Apostle John perceived that being so bright that he could not visualize the illumination. This particular aspect of the bible verse also represents the presence of the “Trinity” (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit). The three persons in one God are inseparable. Wherever one is, all are present. Representing the three (3) candles here, each candle stands for one (1) spirit being of the Supreme Being (God).

All the three candles are actively burning upright which also corresponds to its perpendicular golden stands (Figure 15). One could easily comprehend the philosophy of this iconographic art. The artist has entangled the candles with floral banner of ribbon which bear the inscriptions, *Father* at the central candle and the *Son* on the

right of the Father in mirror view as the *Holy Ghost* (Spirit). At the foreground of the ornamented candles is an opened book which possibly suggests the Holy Bible. Indeed, this iconographic representation is in direct synergy of biblical epistle of John 1:1-11. The blue platform exhibits the gentle graperly of a decorated altar cloth.



Figure 14. *The Face of Jesus Christ*  
Source: Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye



Figure 15. *Illuminated Candles*  
Source: Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye

#### *Sword and Shield of Saint Anthony*

The painting that epitomizes the artist's synthesis of nature tactics of protection, geometry and text is the *Sword and Shield of Saint Anthony*. Indeed, this iconographic image emerged in Catholic Culture, during the era of Crusaders action, which sort to defend the good image of the gospel. The contrast of entire image and illumination distributed to distinguish one component from another. Simultaneously, however, the artist has created the sword as if it is inside the shield which resembles a sack.

The sword behind the diagonal shield represents the defensive spirit of the patron Saint of the local church. Coincidentally, the text 'SAC' is written in Roman style of lettering, while the name of the church also called Roman Catholic Church, or "Roman" as it is being called by the Ghanaian masses. In the text, "A" has been projected probably as a way of rendering respect to the saint (righteous). Another overlapped element in the composition is the palm frond which signifies eulogizes right after gargantuan victory (Figure 16).



Figure 16 *Sword and Shield of Saint Anthony*  
Source: Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye



Figure 17. *The Baptism of Jesus Christ*  
Source: Mural at St. Anthony's  
Cath., Assin Asempanaye

#### *Baptism of Jesus Christ*

Most religious groups as well as Catholic all over the world perceived the baptized faithful as core member of the church. Fulfilling the decree by Jesus Christ to the apostles, (Matthew, 28: 19-21), new member of the church has to been taken through initial teachings in the church (catechism), the sacrament of baptism is performed thereafter. Disputing the doubts about baptism in the entire Christianity, the Catholic Church iconizes the incidence of Christ's baptism in several compositions. One such composition is *the Baptism of Jesus Christ* (Figure 17) which has been inserted in interior ornamentations in St Anthony's Catholic Church at Assin Asempanaye. Clothing Jesus with absolute white garment signifies his divine purity and holiness, while John the Baptist stands in the water of River Jordan (Matthew, 3: 13-17). In the normal circumstances, males who are baptized in the river usually have bare chests.

*The Birth of Christ*: As a way of exhibiting his humility, Jesus' birth in the manger (Luke, 2:7), is represented in this composition (Figure 18). Apart from the far right figure who is perceived to be one of the shepherds or perhaps one of the wise men from the Far East, clothed in dark garment, the rest are in white outfits. The Holy Family (Infant Jesus, Mary and Joseph) and the two angels of which one can possibly be the messenger, Gabriel, among the angels (Ray, 2017). At the background is the two sheep whose pen and manger is being occupied by the just arrived Jesus and others mentioned above.

All the five (5) figures encompass the manger are kneeling to show some kind prophetic reverence to the newly born messiah (Ray, 2017). Surprisingly, both human beings and animals could not afford to annul gazing at the child Jesus who is at the centre. Relating this work to technological energy, a critic could end up commenting that the components have been arranged in converging format





Figure 18. *The Birth of Christ*  
Source: Mural at St. Anthony's Cath. Ch.,  
Assin Asempanaye

### 7. Perceptions of the Youth in Catholic Church

Just as in the terrain of Apostolic Faith Church where the youth were not given the tendency to evangelize the gospel to the world, as appeared in an interview with Kumuyi in Issacoson (199:124), the case is not different from the trend of the Catholic Church and her youth. It was observed from the interviews and direct observation that the youth are *unwilling* to send the gospel to the people in the outside world based on the inadequate understanding of the numbering iconographic arts used in the Archdiocese Catholic worship. The various signs and symbols are not well explained to them in the Parishes.

This means that the youth are not well educated about the entire iconography that spice up the spiritual growth of the Catholic Church. Most of the actual meanings of such iconographic arts are kept in the bosom of clergy and the catechists, yet expecting the members to know. In his personal converse, Fr. Coleman for example stated in the Ash Wednesday sermon that “as for this one you have to know” (Fr. Coleman, personal interview, 2017). But during the provision of the concluding notes, the youth narrates that there is something peculiar about the icons in the church. They are not just mere artworks, rather they possess certain kind of divine forces and surrounded by mysteries. Typical examples were shared. In 2015 the *sacristy* in the Cape Coast Catholic Cathedral gartered by fire but the bible, crucifix, monstrance and other vital Mass accessories did not burn. In fact, the official report of this fire outbreak was issued by the Central Regional section of Ghana National Fire Service. Just as the Cathedral in Mexico City, has also been affected by severe earthquake, the altar, crucifix and a statue of Mary are intact at the sanctuary.

B. Kulevome and V. A. Baidoo (personal communication, March 1, 2017) proclaimed that they were physically and spiritually inspired by the imposition of the ashes at the *Ash Wednesday*. During their interviews, these young ladies categorically stated that they strongly believe that when one is truly repented, the person can boldly visit the Ash Wednesday penitential service. Even if the one does not catch up with the main celebration, one can see the priest or the minister-in-charge or catechist for a brief prayer and in actual imposition of the ashes. Getting to the climax at the interviews, Benedicta and Victoria (pseudonyms used here) added that the exercise is not just a mere one, rather it ones heavenly favour, blessings and protection to people like them. They finally disclosed that indeed the just ended celebration has opened their hearts to God, where the young ladies emphatically added that, “we have repented from our wrong doings”. And they promised to join the church very soon. It is expected of them to be abreast of certain fundamental of the signs and symbols used in church.

But *The Rites of the Catholic Church* (1991) contributes that, for the young ones, and new members or visitors

who have just join the Catholic faith, at least, need to understand some basic things especially in seasonal times like Ash Wednesday and Lent as a whole.

### **8. Observations of the Sacrament of the Parishes Visited**

Catholic Church in general applies seven major sacraments in her worship. As asserts by McKenzie (1965), the term *Sacrament* did not appear neither in the Old Testament nor the New Testament. It is a word that is preferably employed by the Church. It is under which the Church's common traits are deduced from and also directs the manner individual *rites* of the church's liturgy are used. Kirche in Not (2005), also narrates that Sacraments are efficacious signs of grace perceptible to the human senses which is instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ and entrusted to the church. In addition, Sacraments are the various specific rites that are performed at a particular point in time. The exact rites are typically based on the scripture which have been practiced by the early people of God till the present time. The Sacrament was observed in all the Parishes studied.

Outlining the individual rite under the Sacrament, the first one to consider is *Baptism* which is preceded by Confirmation. The rest are the Holy Eucharist, Penance (Reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Matrimony. Every new member is initiated not the faith through Baptism. Without it one is not recognized as a full member of the Catholic faith. Members are immersed in water or the water is poured on them or water is sprinkled on them. The rite is accompanied by the saying by the priest or the minister, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-19). Baptism is a spiritual way of immersing some into the death of Christ and rises with him as "new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17). Base on the biblical evidence in the book of Psalm (51: 5), records that infants are brought forth in iniquities. During Baptism, the main symbol used is water for the cleansing or purification of the slavery soul. White garment is shown to the baptized which reflect holiness of God (Revelations 1:14). *Chrism oil* (anointing oil) is used to anoint the chest immediately after the water performance.

The final symbol in the Baptism is lightened candle (lamp stand) (Revelations 1: 12-13a). It is given to the baptized to shine like the light of the world (Jesus). Secondly, few days or at a certain period of time depending on the member's schedule, the Sacrament of *Penance* (reconciliation) will also follow. Here, the faithful willingly denounce the evil acts and ask God for his pardon. The priest or the minister directs the one for his/ her forgiveness. For the infant babies, their sins are denounced by the parents or guardians.

Prior to the celebration of the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated on every Saturday or by the appointment by the priest. The main iconographic form of art in this sacramental rite is the stole. The priest wears purple (mauve) stole when listening to confessions (Malaty, 1992). Further, the third sacramental rite which is the center of the congregation gathering is the Eucharistic Celebration (Mass). At least, every faithful should receive the Holy Eucharist (body and blood of Christ Jesus) once annually (Chapman, 1985).

### **9. Observations of Arts and Performances at Assin Bereku Parish**

In order to link the manner in which some of mentioned iconographic works of art are use during various liturgical activities in the church, the research critically witnessed some performances during the 2017 *Lenten Season* at Assin Asempanaye. The various activities or performances in the Catholic liturgical culture is typically universal, only that in different parts of the world certain items may be available or not for a particular occasion. Over here in Ghana, the philosophy of enculturation usually comes into being. Kottak, (2002) opines that, "*enculturation* is the process by which people learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire values and behaviours appropriate or necessary in that culture". In fact, all these activities occur with three (3) continuous days. Each occasion is held in a separated day. These performances consist of *Easter Triduum*, *Passion of Christ Jesus* (Good Friday) and Lighting Service.

#### *Easter Triduum:*

The liturgical rite of the Holy Week as narrated to the researcher is customary held on Thursday before the climax of the Lenten Season which is popularly known as *Good Friday*. This is technically called *Easter Triduum*. The activity is performed in accordance with the manner in which these scenarios occur in the Holy Scriptures. On Thursday night, the great memorial service is held at the Church with *Washing of Feet* rite in the night service.

Items use for this rite include bucket of water, basin and white or close to white cloth of towel. Personalities consist of the Catechist who represents our Lord Jesus Christ and any other twelve selected members from the Youth groups, who stands in place of the twelve apostles of Christ. Taking the spiritual connotations into serious account, the *Washing of Feet* is usually performed annually.

Indeed, it is meant for spiritual remembrance of Jesus' official farewell night and as final cleansing prior to the *Last Super* (Lord's Super). Philosophically, the performance is one a spiritual direction instituted from God Almighty, and the church has also urge her members to undertake such exercise when the time is due.

Truly, one cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven unless, one humbles him/herself. This activity takes place as a sign of humility, demonstrated by Jesus Christ himself. Culturally, children from low class homes, caretakers and ancient slaves are usually assigned the junk works in the domestic homes. Vis-à-vis, Christian leadership should rather occupy with so-called junk works.

Jesus also performed this for the apostles (clergy line) to serve their members. Just as Jesus laid down his absolute life for humankind, so should be the life style of the traditional leaders in our milieu who also laid down their lives by solving problems for their people. It is an example for all leaders to make sure things are rightly done to ease the pressure and oppression from their subordinates.

During the actual performance, the catechist as Jesus ties the towel around his waist and narrates the essence of His death and *Washing of Feet* to the twelve. The sad and unfortunate remarks begin when the Catechist (Jesus) process from the main entrance to the area afore the sanctuary in the church. Likewise, the ancient outfits for apostles, the performers put on choir robes or *cassock* whiles some tie ropes at their waists to ensure comfortable movement as they process in the middle lane in the church.

The Catechist (leader) washes the apostles' feet one after the other. After washing every individual's feet of the twelve, he wipes them before moving to another fellow. Indeed, the symbolic observation last for within an hour. Commenting about this spiritual exercise in its real sense, it is uneasy on the side of many leaders to always come down to level of their subordinates. Leaders, especially, some husbands in African Christian milieu always want the wives to serve them. Even if it happens once for the husband to serve the children in the absence of the wife, whether on rare cases or for a good reason, that husband will be peeved (P. F. Kwateng, personal communication, 2017). Cleaning someone's feet as Christ Jesus exhibited to the apostles is in synergy with biblical assertion by one of the apostles (James 4:10). Also, there is an Akan proverb of Ghana which narrates, "Humbleness results in good reward" (Christaller, 1933).

#### *Passion of Christ Jesus - Good Friday - (Stations of the Cross):*

During the field work, it was found out that prior to climax of the season of lent, the rites of stations of cross (ways of the cross) is observe on each Friday within this spiritual season of Lent. Unlike Christmas and other joyous festivities where drumming and dancing are performed in the church, the entirety of Lenten Season, specifically, Good Friday is the other way round. Catholicism has reserved this day purposely for the members to indulge retrospectively into their evil deeds within the year so as to attain pity before their maker (Milgate, 1988). The universal church has added one station to make it fifteen.

But the local church, St. Anthony's Catholic Church at Assin Asempanaye is still using the initial fourteen stations. The performance of this particular spiritual exercise is usually accompanied by stylistic series of painting which really depict the brutality of Jesus before during and after taken to His execution grounds at, Calvary (John 19:18- 41 & [http://www.josemariaescriva.info/docs/viacrucis\\_eng.pdf](http://www.josemariaescriva.info/docs/viacrucis_eng.pdf)). A number of five (5) ceremonies of Stations of the Cross are held as part of solemn preparation towards the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) one, which falls on the Good Friday (St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 2017).

On the Good Friday morning, all the images of the fourteen Stations of the Cross are solemnly arranged at the vantage points which include both the principal street and the *appian ways* and slums of Assin Asempanye where the grounds were spacious to occupy a number people. Lamenting about the spiritual connotations of this performance, it is purposely meant for reflections about the agony of Christ Jesus. The philosophy backing this misery is denotes the climax of Christianity. This really reveals the cruel and anarchy situation that happened to Jesus and His colleagues. In the cultural perspective, just as Ghanaians, precisely, Akans usually and other

southern ethnic groups wear black clothes for funerals, the remembrance of Jesus' death on Good Friday, is an activity *penance*. According to Catholic Code of Canon Law II 1249 and 1250 (1983), all Catholic faithful throughout the world are part God's creation and the divine law also binds the faithful that they should make a point and observe penance so as to get closer to one's maker.

The activity was also used as a way of asking God to show His pity on souls who are broken-hearted. Taking the actual performance into consideration, instead of priest, the Catechists lead programme, as indicated earlier that Assin Asempanaye is an out station under the auspices of Assin Bereku Parish. The *Parochial Vicar* (Assistant Priest) visit the community bases on his itinerary. Inside the church, three members from Knights of the Altar (Mass Server); one bearing the processional crucifix while the other two (2) held the candles stands with lightened candles on top of them.

These three servants stood at the sanctuary just before the altar while facing the faithful, with the *cross bearer* positioned in the mist of the other two servants. Since the activity is observed annually, the Catechist gave a brief explanation to the entire congregation. It was indicated that the programme has three (3) major categories. The initial part covers the exodus of *Stations of the Cross*- through the community. The beta one is the *Genuflection* (Veneration of the Cross). And lastly, the programme was concluded with the *General Intercession*, where numerous supplications were presented Yahweh Almighty. Just after the briefing, the Catechist (minister) then turn his back to the faithful while they all stand up, and faces the Cross. The service begins with these words, "in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit". And the congregation responds, "Amen" with a loud voice. The Catechist continues with the introduction of a prayer, "Stations of Cross, a prayer that is proclaim afore the altar".

*Opening Prayer:*

"O My Lord Jesus, You go to die for love of me.  
Please let me come with You on your way.  
My Jesus, I will try to live and die always close to You".  
The leader adds in the subsequent prayers;

*Prayers and their responses prior to every station:*

"We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you".  
And the congregation response,  
"Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world".

And before actual detail prayers, all genuflect (kneel on one knee briefly). All stand while the leader says the detailed prayer at every station.

*Prayers and their responses at the concluding part of every station:*

All kneel properly with both knees prior to the underneath prayers.  
"Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be the Father...."  
"Have mercy on us O Lord"  
And the congregation response  
"Have mercy on us" (The Catholic Company, 2017).

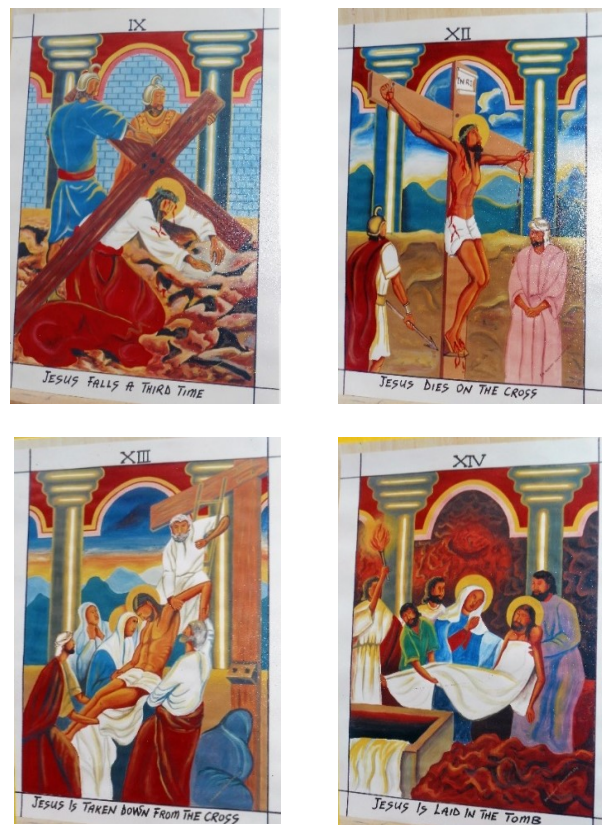
The leader continues, "from station one (1) to station fourteen Between stations one to fourteen, prayers are said by the Catechist (leader) and the faithful response immediately after which are in conformity with the exact scenario that happen at a particular time period during the brutality of Jesus Christ himself (MacGillivray, 2013).

It is absolutely lucid that all these stations are also base on empirical evidence from the Holy Bible as listed in the subsequent text:

- Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death (Mark 15: 1-15, Matthew 27:23-31);
- Station 2: Jesus takes up the Cross (John 19:13-17, John 19: 5);
- Station 3: Jesus falls for the first time (Isaiah 53: 4-7, Matthew 11:28-30);
- Station 4: Jesus meets his Mother (John 19: 25-27);
- Station 5: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his Cross (Mark 15: 21);

- Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus (John 14: 9, Matthew 25:40);
- Station 7: Jesus falls the second time (Hebrews 4:15, Isaiah 63: 9);
- Station 8: Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem (Luke 23: 27-31);
- Station 9: Jesus falls the third time (Luke 22: 28-32);
- Station 10: Jesus is stripped of his garments (John 19: 23-24);
- Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the Cross (Luke 23: 33-43);
- Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross (John 19: 28-37, Matthew 27: 50);
- Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the Cross (John 19: 38-40);
- Station 14: Jesus is laid in the Tomb (Mark 15: 46-47).

As part of Catholic liturgical culture to recall and meditated upon the iconographic arts, every scenario of the fourteen traditional events in the passion of Jesus are critically visualized during Stations of the Cross on Fridays in the Lenten season in the climax Good Friday (Milgate,1988). In addition, the researcher also found out that on Good Fridays, there is no celebration at the altar, the Eucharistic ritual is absolutely out of the service, rather only the distribution of Holy Communion is done. Traditionally, the church performs all the necessary rituals prior including the Holy Eucharistic consecration. Prior to the Friday activities, the altar is stripped naked, while all the statues of the saints and crucifixes in the church are veiled after the Thursday's *Triduum Mass*. Above all; the popular station that is usually used for genuflection rite is the Station Twelve (Figure 19). This particular point has been the center of focus for the entirety of Christian religious orthodoxy (Milgate, 1988).



**Figure 19.** Stations (9, 12, 13 & 14) of Stations of the Cross

**Source:** St. Anthony's Cath. Ch., Assin Asempanaye

Elaborating about exact truth on the ground where all these cruelties took place, Milgate (1988) adds that, various locations have been evocated by numerous religious groups from the orthodox line. Some such groups include the Franciscan congregation of the Roman Catholic Church, Anglicans and other Easting Orthodoxy.

Campbell, (1986) also contributes that, after the invasion of the Muslims which coursed massive destruction to the Holy Grounds, the various places have been restored by museums and galleries in different art forms. Such iconographic art forms, especially, mural paintings and mosaic art, usually depict Jesus' agony. The restored works of art have been rendered in ancient styles of the twelve century. Throughout the activities of Jesus' Passion, Stations of the Cross, the church is in a way realize her mission of incorporating this particular iconographic image in this spiritual activity. Visualizing the scenarios of Jesus' agony, the researcher realized that greater number of the congregation really regret about their evil acts.

People are down within their souls which result in tears and moody. The observation reveals Jesus' downfall on three (3) occurrences, but He tries moving forward to the execution arena *Calvary*. Drawing lesions from the entire images and performance of Stations of the Cross, the researcher affirms that the activity encourages in-depth perseverance, endurance and high sense of affection throughout the Christian or righteous exodus to the eternity.

#### **10. How best to explain the various iconographic artworks to ensure that they contribute to better understanding of the Catholic liturgy**

As a source of inspiration, many artists in the country began drawing from these images in the church at their tender ages as Giotto copied from his superior, Cimabue in the church (Schneider, 1999). For some, when they set eyes on the crucifix, especially during the Good Friday's Stations of the Cross, they begin to pray for forgiveness and it works for them. Aesthetically, a number of these iconographic arts provide sources of livelihood to many young folks in Ghana, through digitally or manually mastered reproductions. Typical examples of such works of art constitute; calendars, T-shirt, banners and other useful paraphernalia for the socio-cultural human endeavours.

Another contribution affirms that, various interior and exterior walls of human dwellings are furnished with the replica of the fascinating forms of the iconographic works of art. Providing further suggestions as how iconographic arts can be well explained to ensure that they contribute to better comprehension of the Catholic Liturgies, the following pertinent issues were put across. The youth remarked that, knowledgeable Catholics should set up groups to teach the faithful so that they can also explain the icons well to other.

By so doing, this shall accelerate the evangelism towards salvation, which base on the accounts and testimonies of these images. Hence, the essence of learning more about the fascinating art works in the Catholic worship is very significant. The youth should study the appropriateness of the various traditional vantage points, where religious icons can be applied. Indeed, others lament that; no one should be allowed to be discouraged about the catholic liturgical images. The comments of the youth reveal that, most of them do not understand the art works in the church. Some too have close up their minds, and deliberately not trying to understand the arts. All new church buildings have to be incorporated with Christian picturesque representations. The backsliders and inactive youth leaders should be up and doing. Providing further opinions, it is catalogue that, some of the youth encourage their peer to use the iconographic art forms as directed by the servants of God's people (priest), popularly known as *akwankyerε* (literally, directions) in the recent Christianity in Ghana. A non-Catholic friend in Italy shared his testimony about the icons in the church. He adds that, gazing and meditating secretly around images in a nearby cathedral has really save his life, job, and given him absolute repentance.

During church *catechises* (teachings), people should ask critical questions about the icons. Priest and catechists should do their best to explain the iconographic arts to the faithful when the deed arises. The Catholic Education Unit with the collaboration of Catholic Teachers' Guild should incorporate a period of *church doctrine* on catholic school time tables. This will at least, contribute to mute the negative ideologies people have conceived. Issuing other general comments by the youth about the interview, the following were gathered; the youth should understand the two blocks of the church; the old and the new prophecies. Priest and catechists should not take the faithful for granted. So far as they are regular at church programmes, does not necessarily mean they know everything. At least, little time should be apportioned to elaborate on the iconographies in the church.

The Youth further emphasised that church artists should take time and read more literature about the signs and symbols, to raise enough philosophical concerns about their commissions. And the concerns will pave way for the church to draw people's attention on these arts. Attempt to expunge the misconceptions from the youth on

these iconographic arts, were dealt with. The staunch youth members agreeably disclosed that, entering a church or finding one's self in the church does not imply one's willing ideologies, the so-called rights and manipulations can override the biblical traditions of the church (Youth at Assin Fosu Parish). In addition, some of the youth claims that when they visit other churches, they make merry with excessive noise as a way of praising Almighty God.

In contrast, Catholicism is too sanctimonious and full of several images. As a form of rebuttal, the other youth group remarks that, the power of the God or the Holy Spirit operates in diverse ways in different religious denominations. But all sum up to one same God. So Catholics should count themselves blessing and begin to do further research about the faith, rather than making unfruitful comparisons (Youth at Assin Bereku Parish). One particular participant remark that, "I am a Catholic but I am not concerned about these icons, especially the rosary. What I want, I come to church and partake the various activities" (Youth at Winneba). In a similar context, another youth respondent recounts that; nothing triggers me to abounding my dear church, *Mesom ara awu*, literally, "I will worship till death" (Youth at Elmina Parish).

A permanent entity like wide range of radio or television stations, should be established in the Archdiocese, for such in-depth education, when and where necessary. As exposed in the stained-glass windows and ceiling of Kumasi Minor Basilica, more of such Akan adinkra symbols that are directly related to the gospel should also be incorporated in the newly built chapels. The youth who feel reluctant to read the bible should find some time for themselves and do so. And the youth who have less value for the church due to its involvement of the iconographies should discard those doubts through inquisitiveness. No gap should be created, the teachings of the imagery should run through every sect of youth in the church.

Through the directives of the Holy Spirit after Jesus had left to the heaven, the church was only relying on the Old Testament. So, it was until AD 48, which was the period where the converted apostle of the gentiles, St. Paul, wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> letter of Thessalonians to the Church. And later, then other recordings and narratives by the apostles were set aside, to help the formation of the church and salvation. Before the inscription of the scriptures, the church was in existence 48 year after Jesus had ascended to heaven. So, within this long stretch of years, the church relied on verbal narratives, signs and symbols to teach the congregation in Jerusalem, Rome and Alexandria in Egypt, African land. The attitude of condemning the iconographies, precisely, the saints among non-Catholics should be done constructively. Officially, Many Ghanaians have at least a Christian name with their local names. To add, all these Christian names are the very names the former righteous (saints) persons bear.

## 12. Findings

In response to research question 1, majority of the youth indicated that the various imageries were not well disseminated to them by the leaders of the church. But at the other side of the coin it was recorded that, despite the inability of the youth to attain the clear understanding of the pictures, the iconographic arts in the Catholic Church are not for just mere decorations, rather they are very peculiar and are in conformity with the biblical and Christian traditional records.

Again, based on the second research question, it was observed that out of the numerous icons specially, the saints used in the church, only few are well known within the Archdiocese of Cape Coast. The walls and gates of various parish premises and other church possessions should be adorned with symbols and images used in the church celebrations. Instead of possessing a particular design for specific youth programmes every year, the youth council generates a new design. And so, within a period of four or five years, several images are brought up. Such arts really confuse and disturbs the people both liturgically and economic grounds. A design can be in existence for quite some time so as curb such occurrences.

Findings from research question 4 revealed that the participants of the study made some suggestions to ensure that the iconographic artworks are explained well to facilitate completion of the Catholic liturgy. Some of the suggestions include: local version of the foreign religious patterns like Ghanaian adinkra symbols should be incorporated in the newly established Catholic Church buildings within the church in Ghana, more importantly, Archdiocese of Cape Coast. Further, the church must also establish radio and television channels which will serve as major means to educate and sensitize the people periodically about the liturgical imagery.

Audio visual documentaries should be sent through SMS and other social media on handset phones so that

members especially the youth will be well vest with the various iconographic arts used in the church. The incorporation of iconographic arts in the church, have kept accurate traces of church or Christian tradition over four decades after the death of Jesus Christ which brought absolute mute among the entrusted apostles of the gospel.

Icons, especially the saints are the very Christian names used by majority of Ghanaian populace. And so, the affordable paraphernalia like handkerchiefs, calendars, mufflers and T-shirts of the church imagery should be made available in vantage gift shops for in Catholics and other interested persons. These productions should be accompanied by brief notes of such iconographies. Catechesis should be organized prior to major church celebrations.

### 13. Conclusions

First, it can be concluded that the iconographic artworks used in the Catholicism are diverse and have varied meanings. It can also be concluded that the meanings are explained within specific contexts. Second, it can be concluded from the findings to research question 2, that much more efforts and comprehensive strategies are needed to sensitize the youth on the essence of the iconographic art in the Catholic Church.

Third, based on the public perceptions of the iconographic arts in the Catholic culture, one can conclude that they have misconceptions about the visual imagery in the church. It can be concluded that most people do not understand their uses. Fourthly, it can be concluded that the youth have ideas as to how to get them to understand via audio visuals on social media.

Also, effective periodic catechesis should be incorporated as preamble in the Sundays' worship. Therefore, general secretariat should be created at the parish levels to seek to document and solve various comments and by way of questions, contributions and suggestions concerning the uses of iconographic artworks in the Catholic culture.

In relation to conclusions drawn to the first research finding, the iconographic arts in the church should be disseminated to the youth through catechesis such as *Laitty programmes* (activities for non-clergy faithful) so as to reduce or if possible, expunge the doubts in Catholicism. The church within the Archdiocese of Cape Coast, should establish an art team which will seek the approval and appropriateness of the various artist's commissions.

In addition, the proposed art team should have persons with art background at least within every deanery to accomplish the tasks concerning imagery in the church and her structural possessions. The church can also have art website which will seek to promote the Catholic faith, with regards to various signs and symbols in the local churches, so as to attract more souls to the Catholic family. Based on the misconceptions about the use of the iconographic works of art, a lot of video documentaries and retreats that are meant to explain the essence and uses of these works should be organized periodically by the clergy and other faithful in the church. With regards to the perceptions of this church artistry representations, affordable paraphernalia of the various images should be made available during church programmes. Periodically, church accessories print should be shared among the youth to ease the ideology of negative perceptions of the arts. This will help the youth frond to spread issues of icon to their peer to build better comprehension of the church's iconographic imagery in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cape Coast.

In addition to the solo Church Museum in Elmina Parish centre, Deanery centres should possess at least, picture museums with precise information about the images. This will assist the church members and researchers to trace archival records in faster and easier manner. The museums will aid for the gathering and taking proper care of the church antiques. Based on the issues concerning further studies on religious iconographic arts, art professionals, critics and academic gurus should be persuaded to research into critical topical issues of the church imagery. The published documents of such research will open avenues for members and the public to get better understating of these signs and symbols in the Catholic tradition.

Also, the youth and other lackadaisical church members who have isolated themselves from church traditions would have access to study to acquire enough knowledge of Catholic culture. To add to the aforementioned recommendations, experts of this subject should conduct further researches into the iconographic arts so as to unveil unfamiliar imagery of the Catholic worship. Also interested amateur persons of this artistic topical issue



can rely on this document as a spring board and dealt in iconographic arts in diverse dimensions.

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